LLOWSHIP IN

RAYER

. 3 June, 1989

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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These days, as Fellowship in Prayer works on plans for its "Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth," to be held in June of 1990 on the 40th anniversary of our founding, the papers are full of news about our endangered planet—most of it bad. In the last two days, for example, I read the following stories in the *New York Times*. "The first national survey of toxic chemicals poured into the air by industry shows they are being emitted at rates that threaten public health," members of Congress and Federal officials said today.

The Environmental Protection Agency said 60 of the chemicals were listed by the Government as causing cancer. Other chemicals listed are known to cause neurological disease or birth defects. "The magnitude of this problem far exceeds our worse fears," said Representative Henry A. Waxman, who is subcommittee chairman.

Another story read, "Deploying huge nets, each twice as long as Manhattan, hundreds of fishing vessels . . . are plying the North Pacific, trapping tens of thousands of porpoises, seals, seabirds and a wide variety of deep ocean fish, with results that are potentially devastating for the ocean's ecology."

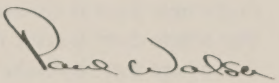
Turning to America's forests, we read, "In the American rain forests, running from Northern California through Southeast Alaska, more of the tallest and oldest trees in the world are being cut from public land than ever before—three times the annual rate at the height of the post-war building boom. The cutting . . . threatens the last stands of ancient trees in the United States, as well as the throngs of animals and birds that have dwelled in the forests for eons."

Yet another news item said that "The Environmental Protection Agency's pesticide division has recommended barring use of an acutely toxic insecticide on potatoes and imported bananas." The staff report says the chemical presents an unreasonable risk to infants and children. The insecticide (aldicarb) is made from methyl isocyanate, the chemical that killed more than 2,000 people and injured tens of thousands in Bhopal, India.

The good news is that we are finally coming to realize that through lack of reverence for the divine nature of all God's creation, we have turned what was once a paradise of clear sparkling waters, clean, fresh air, and rich, nourishing soil into a wasteland of filthy rivers, air thick with pollution, and tons of toxic wastes with no place to go. We are finally coming to realize the truth of the words spoken by the American Indian leader, Chief Seattle, in 1885: "Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls also the children of the Earth." What we do to the environment we do to ourselves—and to our children, and to their children.

Through prayer and meditation we begin to realize that in the web of life God created, you and I, whales and dolphins, butterflies and bluebirds—all are part of one living organism, interconnected and mutually dependent. Let us pray, then for the wisdom and grace to act on that knowledge—even when it means giving up some of our own selfish, short-term interests.

As we reflect on these truths and act on them, we begin to realize the efficacy of prayer. Our individual efforts—be they as modest as, say, carpooling, recycling, or supporting sound environmental practices and laws—bring the fruits of prayer and meditation into daily life and extend our aspirations into and through other beings in wider and wider circles.



Paul Walsh
President
Fellowship in Prayer, Inc.

In a wonderful children's story, *The Giving Tree*, a little boy and a tree become friends. The little boy loves to climb the tree and eat its apples, to swing from its branches and sit in its shade. He plays "Hide-and-Seek" by the tree and uses its leaves to make a crown for himself. But as the little boy grows up, he comes less and less often to visit the tree, which is more and more alone. By the time the boy is an adult he returns to the tree only when he needs to ask for help, which the tree always gives him happily: apples to sell for money, branches to build a house, and finally its trunk to build a boat. Now it would seem that the tree has nothing left to give.

But when the man returns after a long absence and has grown old and weary, the tree gives him its stump so he can sit and rest. Now having given all that it had to give, the tree experiences happiness.

As the years have gone by, I have never forgotten this lovely childhood tale. Perhaps because it touches the deep level of the heart where I know—as you do—that what each one of us wants more than anything else is to give completely and totally all that we have to give.

St. Francis of Assisi expressed this universal human longing in one of the world's most beloved prayers:

> Lord, make me a channel of your peace,
> that where there is hatred I may bring love,
> that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness,
> that where there is discord I may bring harmony,
> that where there is error I may bring truth,
> that where there is doubt I may bring faith,
> that where there is despair I may bring hope,
> that where there are shadows I may bring light,
> that where there is sadness I may bring joy.
> Lord, grant that I may seek to comfort rather than to be comforted,
> to understand than to be understood,
> to love than to be loved.
> For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.
> It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.
> It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen.

The need to give, as expressed in this prayer, is the sun around which all our other needs revolve. To give unconditionally, without looking for a reward, creates an enduring sense of self-worth, infuses our whole being

with a feeling tone of warmth, transforms our scars and problems into seeds of new love, and imparts the deepest meaning that can be experienced in our lives on this earth.

The articles in this edition of *Fellowship in Prayer* celebrate the vast potential of prayer and meditation to awaken extraordinary powers of self-giving. I hope that in this issue you will find many ways of living the St. Francis Prayer by spreading peace and love, forgiveness and truth, faith and hope, and joy and comfort throughout the world.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky
Editor

Even as a mother watches over and protects her child . . . so with a boundless mind should one cherish all beings, radiating friendliness over the entire world, above, below, and all around without limit.

From the Metta Sutra

When [Mother Teresa] had finished and the meeting was over, they all wanted to touch her hand, to be physically near her for a moment; to partake of her, as it were. She looked so small and frail and tired standing there, giving herself. Yet this, I reflected, is how we may find salvation. Giving, not receiving. Dying in order to love.

Malcolm Muggeridge

Many waters cannot quench love
Neither can floods drown it.

Song of Songs 8.7

If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever. Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.

I Cor. 13.1-7

Without your wounds where would your power be? The very angels themselves cannot persuade the wretched and blundering children on earth as can one human being broken in the wheels of living. In love's service, only the wounded soldiers can serve.

Thornton Wilder

Rock Ritual

ROBERT O'ROURKE

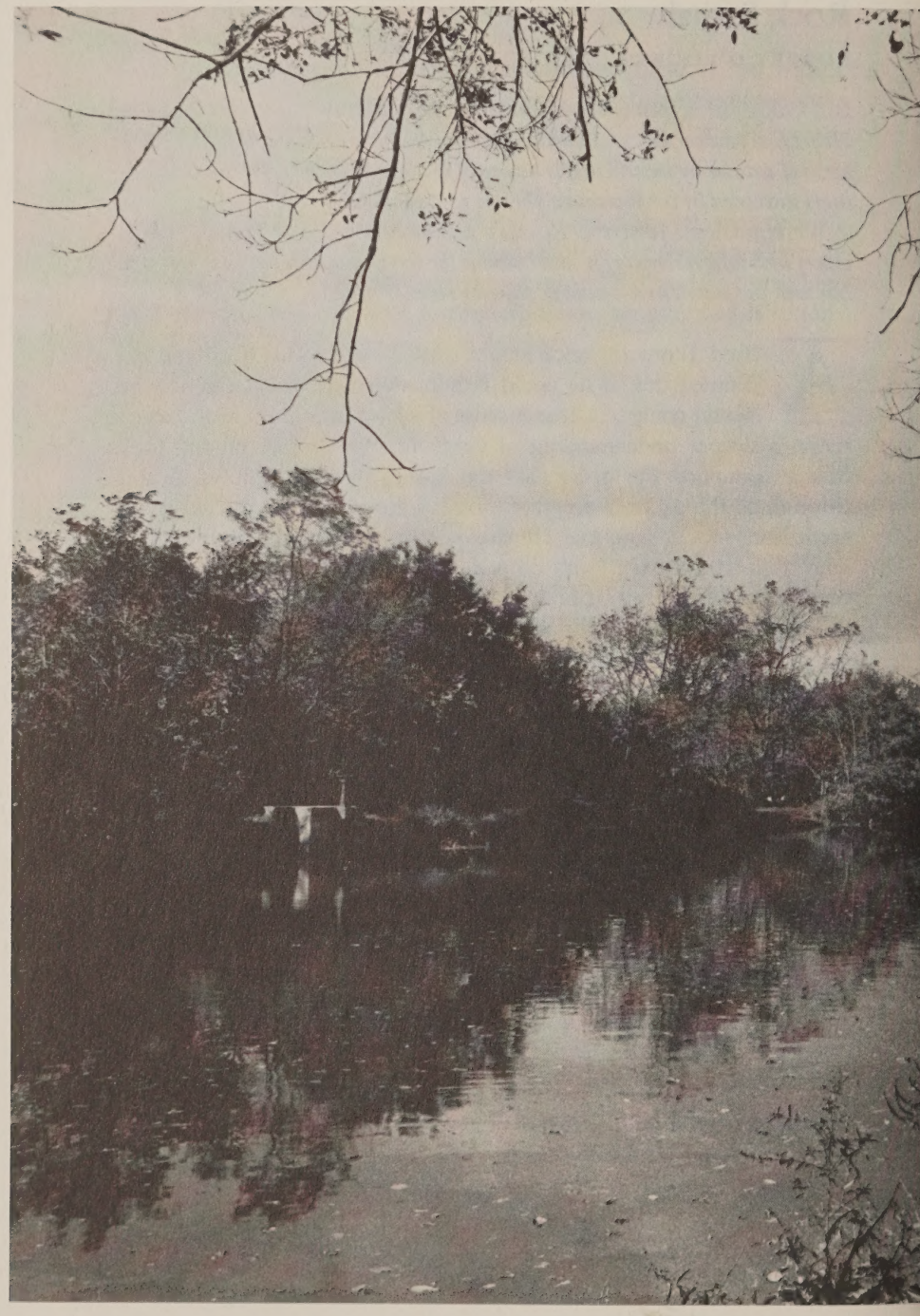
In 1990, F.i.P. is sponsoring a Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth. In anticipation of that event we are bringing you a series of articles by writers deeply aware of the beauty of the earth and exceedingly distressed by the imminent threats to its survival.

We begin with Robert O'Rourke's extraordinary "Rock Ritual," which evokes awe and reverence for all creation: for the breeze, a cloud, a flower, the sun and the moon, and—most of all—for rocks.

Alfred Tennyson once held a small flower in his hand and exclaimed that if he could fathom that tiny bit of creation he would come to a keener sense of who he was, his life and, even more, a deeper understanding of God! Tennyson's awe of that little flower contained the belief that the Spirit-of-Creation flows in and through all things . . . a breeze, a cloud, a flower, a rock, insects, trees, earth, sun, moon, you, me! He shared a reverence with Matthew Fox who holds that nature looks on each of us with affection and has the capacity for Divine revelation to all who possess a sense of wonder. With this view in mind may I propose a ritual with a rock? A rock because they are millennia old and have experienced a variety of life forms during their long sojourn on earth. Rocks, like small flowers, are wise.

> Hold your rock in the hollow of your hand. See in imagination its beginning in the world . . . How it was born . . . The panorama of life this rock has been present to . . . Sit for awhile and get to know your rock . . . After a time ask those questions most personal to you about life . . . death . . . self . . . others . . . God. Hear the answers resounding in your heart that the mind could never understand . . . Listen to the mystery revealed . . . Reflect on the moment . . . the wonder . . . Continue to gaze at your rock. Is there a special song it sings? A feeling it conveys? A wisdom it shares?
>
> In appreciation thank your rock for any message it has given and place it in an available spot where it may again speak to you. Or, carry it in your pocket. Hold it often in your hand and heart . . . a companion . . . a teacher . . . your reflection of life . . . a symbol of God. Make no apology for wonder.

Robert O'Rourke is a writer and folk artist who carves santos *(statues of the saints most revered by the people of New Mexico).*



B. H. Westgate

The Gift of Woman Spirit

JANE KAVALOSKI

Nonviolence, reconciliation, intimacy and endless self-giving especially to the young and to victims of injustice. These are part of "the gift of woman spirit," which according to this writer can and must end the severe inequality that still exists between men and women, rich and poor, privileged and underprivileged.

Historically women have been the caretakers of the household. Now our "household" is the whole planet!

As women's traditional roles change and more women take an active part in society's wider arenas, it is important to recognize and affirm our experience growing up female. In order for us to look more closely at what women's experience has to offer, I want to share my reflections on two questions: Who are we as women? What are the spiritual dimensions of our womanness?

Who are We as Women?

1) We as women are biologically tied to the rhythms of life and have been nurturers of human life at its most vulnerable.

Our cycles link us to the vast oceanic force of life. We are co-creators, the carriers, the birthers of new life. As our bodies swell with new life, we intimately experience our partnership with the divine act of creation. Our bodies become the crucible for that miracle of birth.

But whether or not we have ever borne a child—and in no way do I want to foster the notion that one is less of a woman if she has never experienced birthing—we have been culturally the nurturers of the young.

Feminism today speaks to the joy of these responsibilities, but also to their limits. Feminists are acutely aware of the loss to ourselves, our children, our husbands and society when men do not have the opportunity to share in this loving responsibility of nurturance.

Jane Kavaloski is Co-Director with her husband Vincent of the Ecumenical Partnership for Peace and Justice, which is sponsored by the Wisconsin Conference of Churches. You may receive their newsletter, Metanoia, *by writing c/o Kavaloski, Rte. 3, Box 228E, Dodgeville, WI 53533.*

2) As women our perceptions, our values emerge from the context of relationships and we possess a more relational sense of self.

Recent works by psychologist Carol Gilligan and others suggest that our childrearing practices produce women who define themselves and their values in terms of interpersonal relationships. As a girl grows up, her female role models are very present in her life. Her identity thus is formed by bonding with these mother figures. Consequently the opposite is true for a boy. His identity is formed by breaking away—disengaging from these mother figures—becoming what they are not.

Feminists believe that a healthier psychological development would be one in which girls and boys grow up with equal female and male role models. Such childrearing practices provide more of an opportunity for children to develop personality structures which integrate the values of intimacy and interpersonal relationships, with values of separateness and individual autonomy.

3) As women, we have experienced feelings of powerlessness and alienation and we know the hopelessness which can result.

I assume that most of us can clearly identify times when we strongly felt the inequality of being born female. We have all grown up in a culture of sexism—a society in which half of the human experience is emphasized and power primarily lies in one sex. Male opinions are sought and followed; male authority is obeyed. For the most part female experience is considered less valuable, peripheral, or of interest only to other females.

Feminism seeks to take the female experience and to offer it as an equally important part of life. Wanting neither patriarchy nor matriarchy, feminism seeks the equal participation of men and women in all aspects of personal and societal life.

What then are the Spiritual Dimensions of our Experience as Women?

For me, our spirituality emanates from all dimensions of our experience . . . biological, socio-emotional, and political.

1) Biologically connected to the rhythms of life, we are called to be defenders of creation promoting and living the religious values of nonviolence and reconciliation.

At a time in human history when the world moves closer to the abyss

of nuclear annihilation, women are called to be nurturers of life. For the sake of our children and our children's children, we must seek alternatives to the present security system which perpetuates hate and fear among peoples, and stockpiles nuclear weapons of almost inconceivable destruction. The megatonnage in the world's nuclear arsenal is enough to kill every living person 12 times—and more are being built daily.

In a world wracked with violence, we as women are called to draw upon our experience as nurturers of life. We need to be active promoters of nonviolence at all levels of human existence. All too often that socialization process which makes us caretakers of the young, has stripped us of our rightful assertiveness in the larger world. As women we teach our children not to fight among themselves, but cheer them when they go off to war; or cradle a child whose existence is daily threatened by nuclear weapons, without getting involved in resisting the arms race.

Jesus' teachings on nonviolence and reconciliation offer a virtually untapped source of hope and power for our world. Barbara Deming once said, "I have had the dream that women would at last be the ones to truly experiment with nonviolent struggle, discover its full force."

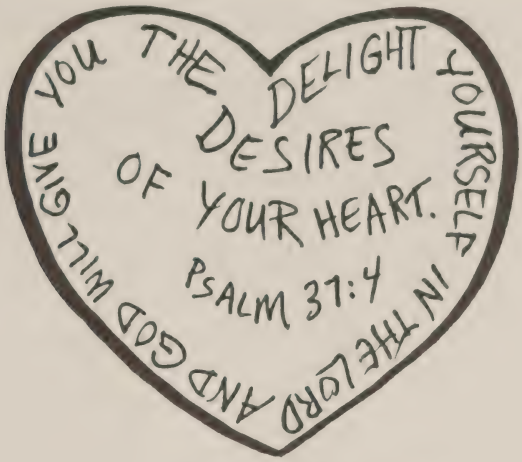
2) Drawing our perceptions and our values from the context of relationships, we are called to foster the loving interdependent relationships inherent in the biblical conception of *Shalom*.

Shalom is a rich image of peace from the Old Testament. *Shalom* represents that peace which emerges from wholesome and just relationships among individuals, the earth, and their God. Unlike the world "peace" which often connotes a static condition void of fighting, Shalom is based on a dynamic sense of community and interdependence.

From our women's perspective, which emphasizes intimacy and relationships, we grieve the brokenness of our world today. We as women are called to tap that wisdom which emanates from our early experience of bonding with our mother figures. We are called to expand that understanding of our universal connectedness into societal and global contexts. Instead of a world divided through the rationality of control and domination, women are called to play an important role in breaking down the barriers that separate us from one another.

3) Having experienced feelings of powerlessness and alienation, we are called to work for justice, to accompany the poor and the oppressed of the world.

Ruth Sivard, an economist, documents that at least "one person in



five" is trapped in absolute poverty, a state of destitution so complete that it "is silent genocide." Approximately 43,000 children die a day from preventable causes—a lack of food, clean drinking water, or inexpensive vaccines. That is 30 children dying every minute—the same minute in which the world's military budget spends $1.3 million. Two billion people, or about 2/5 of the world's population, live on incomes below $500 per year.

The U.S. now has 35 million living in poverty—the largest number since the 1930s. The "feminization of poverty" means that 2 out of 3 poor adults are women, 80% of the poor in this country are adult women and children. At the same time the military budget has doubled in the past eight years.

We as women, who know the experience of powerlessness and alienation, are called to accompany the poor. We are called to help in a cultural shift from values of accumulation and security to values in solidarity with the oppressed of the earth. As privileged and educated women we stand between the very rich and the very poor, the powerful and the weak, and we can choose on which side we will stand. By that choice we have the potential to change the course of history. In summary, women's experience has a unique offering to make to religious thought and witness today. This offering emanates from two perspectives: 1) those bio-

logical, socio-emotional and political dimensions of our womanness, and 2) the spiritual extensions of our experiences as women.

However, challenging traditional patriarchy is not a task to be carried out by ourselves—feminism speaks to all people: Our husbands, our fathers, our sons, and our male friends. Feminine spirituality speaks to a theology of liberation and creation. It is a vision of a world transformed; where feminine and masculine values co-exist; where nonviolence, love and justice are practiced by women and men working together as co-creators of God's Kingdom on Earth!

Tom Dunham

Letting Go

JIM DREAVER

All religions and spiritual traditions agree that before we can give, before we can love selflessly, we must undergo a process of detachment. Here an author explains how meditation taught him to care about the well-being of others without attachment.

Perhaps the hardest lesson on the journey of healing and spiritual awakening, yet the one we must all sooner or later learn, is that of letting go. The great traditions, both of the East and West, speak of non-attachment, of surrender, of dying in order to be reborn, all of which suggest a letting go at a very deep level.

Yet when we let go, what are we left with, what do we find? Is there just then emptiness, nothingness, meaninglessness—which is what it so often feels like, when we contemplate the letting go of all that we hold most dear to us? Or does something else begin to arise, is there in fact the birth of something new?

There is an old Zen saying, "Now that my house has burned to the ground, I have an unobstructed view of the rising moon." This is one of my favorite teachings from Zen, for it says so much about the true meaning of letting go. When we lose something precious or meaningful to us, it is natural to grieve. The more awake we are to our true spiritual nature, however, the sooner the grieving too falls away as we again open our eyes to the wholeness, to the pristine beauty—in this case, the rising moon—that is all around us.

The goal of Zen, and of all spiritual work, it seems to me, is to awaken to the wholeness that is our nature, and then to deepen our relationship with it, to learn to live in the world with it. How many times have we read, in a book with a spiritual theme, that there is really nothing to attain or achieve, that we are perfect as we are, that the kingdom is within us? It is a day of great laughter and joy—in Zen it is called kensho—when we actually glimpse, for the first time, the truth of our own innate perfection.

We all experience these mini-kenshos. On my own journey there were

Jim Dreaver, a chiropractor in Sebastopol, CA, gives workshops on healing and transformation. His new book, Living in the Now, *is a guide to the transformational journey.*

countless times when I found myself embroiled in some mental or emotional turmoil, and then something would happen—perhaps something as simple as taking a deep breath—and all of a sudden the confusion would fall away, and I'd find myself in a state of clarity and ease. "What was all the fuss about?" I'd say to myself, and I'd marvel again at how simple and perfect life really was.

For me, then, this lesson of letting go has been a vital one. Each time I did let go of whatever I was holding onto internally—a belief, a resentment, an expectation—I would feel a new sense of freedom, of lightness. Letting go became the way of my meditation, my spiritual practice. As I sat to meditate I would breathe consciously, deeply, and this always brought about a letting go of tension at the physical level. This in turn helped me relax inwardly, helped me to be still, to be sensitive and aware. Then I would notice the thoughts and ideas that I was clinging to in my mind, and I would experiment with letting go of them.

I found out that I could let go of something I'd been holding onto, and it was okay. I discovered that the worries and problems I'd been so obsessed with really weren't such a big deal after all. The more I was able to let go of them, the more I discovered that beneath the surface conflict in my mind there was something deeper awaiting me. With each letting go, space would open up and a new insight, a new feeling, would come in.

> Now that my house has burned to the ground, I have an unobstructed view of the rising moon.

As we go further in our meditation there may come a point when thoughts drop away altogether—even if only for a few moments—and there is just space, clarity and the sense of something timeless. It is in these moments that our spiritual nature reveals itself to us. There is a sense of infinite well-being, of the utter goodness and rightness of everything—of what, in Zen, is called the suchness of life.

The real letting go, then, is an inner process, the letting go of our beliefs and opinions, of ego itself. This is the true renunciation. As we learn to let go inwardly, then the outer things become less important. We may have material riches or not, depending upon our circumstances, our fortunes, our needs. There won't be that attachment to them though,

because our sense of identity will not come from outside ourselves. Rather, it will come from knowing who we are at an inner, spiritual level.

Similarly, while our relationships will be important to us because we care very much about the well-being of others, there won't be the same attachment there. When someone we love leaves us, when they go away or die, we will feel sad, of course, but the sadness will have its season and at some point we will again awaken to the everpresent beauty and fullness of life.

There is a natural humility that is stirred in us through this process of learning to let go. We begin to realize how beyond our comprehension it all really is, this adventure we call "life." No wonder we come up with words like "God" or "Buddha-nature" to explain it all. In the end—and each moment, if we are awake to it, is both an ending and a beginning—we just have to bow down to it, and be thankful for the gift of being here. It truly is marvelous, a great mystery, and somehow it is all exactly as it is meant to be.

Once, in a moment of desperate longing for an "ultimate" teaching, these words were given to me—a gift from Spirit itself, you might say—and in closing I would like to share them with you:

I am beyond men
New life abounds
Trust.

Praying the Newspaper

MAX OLIVA

A priest and his congregation discover that there is no better way to give to the world than through intercessory prayer.

Prayer is not our most natural response to the world and its problems. In their insightful book, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* (Doubleday), authors Donald McNeill, Douglas Morrison and Henri Nouwen point out that we will always want to do something else before we pray: write a stinging letter of protest, join an organization that is working to resolve the issue, start our own project to confront the problem, or stop reading news reports or watching TV news altogether and confine our reading to Ann Landers and the sports section or our viewing to Bill Cosby and Hill Street Blues.

With that in mind, as we ended the first session of a two-day parish mission in Davis, Calif., I asked the congregation to bring a newspaper to church the following evening because we would try to imitate the compassion of Christ by using the newspaper as a prayer book.

I wondered what the result would be because as the pastor, Father Andrew Coffey, had advised me, the congregation at St. James Church was certainly a diverse lot. They did come the next night: local farm families, politicians and secretaries who worked in the nearby Sacramento state capitol, members of the parish's charismatic renewal groups, students from the University of California-Davis campus. And I was glad to see that most of them carried copies of the local papers, the *Davis Enterprise and Woodland Democrat*, or the *San Francisco Chronicle* or *Sacramento Union*. Some brought *Time* and *Newsweek*.

Max Oliva, a Jesuit priest, is an internationally known writer and workshop leader. He has given presentations on faith and compassion in Europe, Africa, and throughout the U.S. His article is reprinted with the permission of Maryknoll Magazine, Maryknoll, NY 10545.

We had spent the first evening of the mission reflecting on the life of Jesus as he lived compassion, reaching out to the sick, to the sinner, to the despised tax collector, to the centurion, to all in need. We dwelt on the words of Jesus: "Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged; do not condemn and you will not be condemned; grant pardon and you will be pardoned" (Luke 6.36-37).

On the second evening, we began to "pray the newspaper" with a period of silence as each person chose a news story that could elicit some sort of compassionate response. I encouraged them to speak their prayers aloud but also to feel at ease with silence.

The papers had headlines of bombs in Beirut, skulduggery in Washington, violence in Central America, foreclosure on local farmers, protests by Davis students against the university's investments in companies doing business in South Africa. We prayed for victims of terrorist attacks in Lebanon and on the Nicaraguan border, for Black people in South Africa and in the United States, for people suffering from lack of food in Ethiopia and for the local homeless and hungry, for small farmers who had lost everything.

After a period of silence, we continued by praying for those who are working with and for the victimized, sometimes at the risk of their own lives. Again, the congregation responded to news stories by praying for people who run soup kitchens for transients and the homeless, for a lawyer committed to the plight of the poor, for three French missioners expelled from Chile for defending human rights, for Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, for a social worker who had come to the aid of an abused child.

We paused for reflection and then began praying for those who abuse the dignity of others by unjust or violent actions, either deliberately or through ignorance. I introduced this period of prayer by saying, "Those who oppress others are in need of our prayers, too, because any form of oppression is a sign of spiritual death. They are in need of conversion. I pray for them because I remember what Jesus said: 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (Mt. 5.44). I realize, too, that to pray for the oppressor is to pray for the conversion of a part of myself, for the seeds of injustice and violence reside within each of us."

Prayers for enemies were voiced with difficulty, so unaccustomed are we to praying for oppressors. Still, we prayed together, as individuals

SHOW ME YOUR WAYS
O
LORD
TEACH ME YOUR PATHS
PSALM XXV:IV
KENT I. GROFF 1988

asked for the conversion of the right-wing death squads in El Salvador, for bankers who foreclose on farmers and strangle debt-ridden Third World nations, for husbands who abuse their wives, for those who manufacture weapons of war, for the white South African government, for the Communist Party in Poland, for legislators who seem to have little concern for the hungry in the United States. Following another period of silence, we concluded our reflections by praying for a particular grace for ourselves, something that occurred to us in reading the story we had chosen. One person asked God for freedom from fear of speaking out for the rights of others, another for increased compassion, another for the healing of a prejudice that all wealthy people oppress others.

Our Davis experience showed that we can imitate the compassion of Christ by bringing our concern for the world into our prayer in an effective cry for forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and mercy. As Henri Nouwen says so eloquently: "When we come before God with the needs of the world, the healing love of the Holy Spirit that touches us touches with the same power all those whom we bring before our Creator."

More Parables From Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Here by popular demand is a second set of "parables" from Angela, whose advice delighted readers of our February edition. This wise "ten-year-old with a red collie coat and soulful eyes" knows all there is to know about giving and love.

Angela—my canine companion—and I are in our second year of shared bliss. Whenever my schedule and the weather permit, we continue to romp, to sit, and to take time to sniff. Though Angela is one of the most loyal and accepting friends I've ever had, she continues to be, above all, my trusted and revered teacher.

Angela teaches me to feel the presence of God profoundly and unmistakably in the simple and ordinary. She advises me to be on the lookout for God anytime, anywhere. Angela shows me that despite *all hurts*, it is still possible to carry faith safely inside you: a belief that everything turns out for the greatest good of all concerned.

Angela honors, and bows to, the passionate pulse of delight that runs through her veins. She follows this pulse as if it were her only mission. She finds her ecstasy romping freely through the grass, chomping on a biscuit, having her chest stroked, being rubbed down with a towel, and in all the varied fragrances of the universe.

Angela says that there is refreshment to be found by following the quickened beating of your heart, and the intensified twitching of your nose. Following both propels you toward the bliss that life has to offer at any moment of any day.

When we're together, Ang nudges me gently, sweetly, but irresistibly to give her my best. I am kind, gentle, happy, trusting, and affectionate. Angie advises me that this is a good way to be with all living creatures, and that most will respond in kind.

Angela is not Lassie, however. She is nervous around small children, tall people, large trucks, and umbrellas. She will not always come when you call her, nor can you physically pull her somewhere she doesn't want to go. Despite these quirks in her behavior, Angie means the world no

Barbara Ackerman, a poet and singer, takes time to sniff, frolic, and contemplate with Angela in Princeton, NJ.

harm. Her gentle "Live and let live" nature shines through. Despite her fears, she always seeks her ultimate pleasure and must constantly press through her fears to get there. Angela commits small acts of bravery every day. She practices courage.

Although Angie has never saved anyone from a life-threatening situation like Lassie has, she has warmed, softened, and opened the closed, chilly chambers of my own heart. For me, she is a real-life Lassie if ever there was one.

Often when I look into Angie's face, I see beyond her history, her failings, and fears. I see that Angela is a crystal through which I can always get a good, clean view of God. With gratitude for her continuing presence in my life, I share more of Angela's parables with you now. These are her sacred gifts.

Brooks Walsh

1. Make a big fuss over friends you see. Greet them as if it's been years since the last time you met. Jump up. Lick their faces. Yelp. Make excited noises in the back of your throat. Bark. Really share your glee because everyone deserves to be treated like a celebrity once in a while.

2. There is more to good health than exercise and adding oat bran to your diet. Get a good, accurate estimate of how many times a day you need to have your head patted and how many hugs you need to feel your best.

3. If you aren't getting your adequate daily allowance of hugs and head pats, start giving hugs, or be more like "El Exigente," the demanding one.

4. When giving a hug, be polite and ask first. Notice that in a hug there is no difference between the hugger and the huggee. Hugging is an equal-opportunity way of giving what you need to get, and getting what you need to give.

5. Being a dog, I personally prefer head pats over hugs as a sign of support and endearment. I'm sure that people, too, can feel better by receiving or giving a head pat. Do not be ashamed to ask for this if you need it.

6. Even when you adore someone, keep in mind that everyone needs some room for their body. Everybody takes up space and needs some free air around them to breathe. It is a real act of love to not crowd or smother with love the one you love.

7. When you give the one you love some space, chances are, on their own, they will run over to you, lick your face, and place one paw on your arm.

8. Everyone loves to hear kind words like "Sweetie." Speak kind words often. This exercise enhances your vocabulary and is healthy for your heart.

9. All living creatures thrive on kind words—the ones spoken as well as the ones heard. When you use kind words, you become a gardener, a doctor, and a magician all at the same time.

10. When you are with another, try to find the perfection that's there, but which sometimes gets hidden beneath what they say or do or the

way they behave. When you look expectantly for the perfect-ness in another, you very often find it. This also gives you practice in feeling your own perfect-ness.

11. There is nothing like the comfort and reassurance of an old familiar smell at the base of an old familiar tree. When you are in need of comfort, take the old familiar route and name every aroma.

12. For thrills and excitement, take the road less traveled. There is nothing like a few new views and fresh fragrances to add bounce to your step.

13. The highlight of any outing is returning to your waiting family. Run to each member of your family as if it's been a week since you've seen them. Let them know by wagging everything that you are glad for this reunion. Raise your head so they can stroke you there more easily. When

Brooks Walsh

you have gone to each member of your family with glad tidings, it is then time to eat and drink.

14. Do not let others lead you where you don't want to go. People feel uncomfortable if they know they can lead you around by the nose. Be the engineer of your own train and the guardian of your own soul.

15. Sometimes it is better to wear our hearts right out there on our paws. Being stoic and over-guarded makes romping more difficult and diminishes the pleasure of a powerful scent. Do not be ashamed to wear your needs out on your paw from time to time. You will be surprised at how happy and even honored people are to help and respond to you with their best. People like knowing that their kindness and gentleness is of use to you; they welcome the opportunity to be kind. Do not be afraid to give others the opportunity to give you their best.

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16. Periods of grace come and go, ebb and flow. When you are in a state of grace, soak it up. Don't just run. Romp. Bounce. Wag. Roll on your back in the grass. When you feel that you are not in a state of grace, find a sacred space like one end of the couch. Circle your sacred space three times, and plop yourself down. Sleep on a special pillow. Eat crackers in bed. Be assured that grace will return to you. Clap your paws if you need more faith.

17. Notice everything that makes you pant.

18. Follow the quickened beating of your heart. This quickened heartbeat is your passionate pulse running through your veins, also known as your ecstasy.

19. Follow the quickened itchings and twitchings of your nose. Follow your nose wherever it leads, and go there with courage.

20. Let your nose stay on the scent of your ecstasy. This keeps your life interesting, refreshing, and worth living.

21. If you need to feel God's presence in the world but have your doubts, sit beside the one you love and share a sunset. If you feel moved by the view, peaceful and connected to the one you love, be assured you have just discovered God's whereabouts.

22. If you want or need to feel that God is personally close to you, but have your doubts, notice how you feel when you see the one you love coming toward you down the street. Does your tail wag? Do your ears perk up? If the approaching figure of the one you love fills you with awe, wonder, and glee, then rest easy: God is close.

We invite you to send your favorite prayer to the Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. The following prayer was submitted by Gisela Lichtgarn, a potter in Farmington, CT. It was written by Sri Sri Thakur (1888-1969), a spiritual teacher in the village of Himatpur, Bengladesh, who was renowned for wisdom and love. When disciples wanted to convert to Thakur's native Hinduism, he objected, stressing the unity of spiritual truths and laws among all the great religions. It was always his intention to help the people who came to him to recover the meaning and value in their own religious traditions.

Oh God! Let my worship be ceaseless in Thee—
Be Thou ever awakened in my heart,
Let every thought, movement and word and all behaviour
be meaningful in Thee with undeviating love-radiance,
with a maddening love in Thee,
with accomplishing service
to every individual of the universe
like that of those who have been meaningful in Thee,
Let my existence full of life move in the immortal way—
with that successful self-satisfying glow
which makes life worthy of Thee,
Let food and drink
nurture and nourish me and make me long-lived
in existential becoming,
Let my house and its furniture, my family and relations,
my clothing, all my needs
go on carrying nectar invoking Thy fulfilment only,
Let the accomplishing service of this life
integrate each individual of the environment in Thee only
with evolutionary rhythm of Becoming,
Let Thy blessings flowing through my life
make each and every thing blessed,
Let peace be showered on all,
Let everybody be satisfied in Thee only
with delightful contentment—
Let well-being with a pleasing shower
make everybody healthy,

Thou art truth, Thou art love,
Thou art wisdom, Thou art bliss,
Thou art peace,
Let my heart attain immortal consciousness
with concentric unswerving continuity.

Saum

Praise be to Thee, Most Supreme God,
Omnipotent, Omnipresent, All-pervading,
The Only Being,
Take us in Thy Parental Arms,
Raise us from the denseness of the earth,
Thy Beauty do we worship,
To Thee do we give willing surrender,
Most Merciful and Compassionate God,
The Idealized Lord of the whole humanity,
Thee only do we worship; and towards Thee alone we aspire,
Open our hearts toward Thy Beauty,
illuminate our souls with Divine Light,
O Thou, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty!
All-powerful Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and Forgiver of our
shortcomings.
Lord God of the East and of the West, of the worlds above and below,
And of the seen and unseen beings,
Pour upon us Thy Love and Thy Light,
Give sustenance to our bodies, hearts and souls,
Use us for the purpose that Thy Wisdom chooseth,
And guide us on the Path of Thine Own Goodness,
Draw us closer to Thee every moment of our life,
Until in us be reflected Thy Grace, Thy Glory, Thy Wisdom,
Thy Joy, and Thy Peace.
Hazrat Inayt Khan

Hazrat Inayt Khan was the founder of the Sufi Order in the West.

On Spiritual Practice

ROBERT GRANAT

The first part of the spiritual journey is "a happy moment," "like falling in love." Then comes the pain that we would all prefer to avoid. A superb writer with a flair for the perfect image struggles with the problem of spiritual pain and finds that it is both purposeful and meaningful.

Spiritual practice comes second. Second chonologically, not second in importance. Spiritual life is a way and every step along a way is equal in importance. What comes first is spiritual insight. Spiritual practice follows after—long after, sometimes: decades, lifetimes. More commonly, though less commonly nowadays than once, spiritual practice comes first, as a habit impressed into the impressionable from outside. And just as you can go for decades, lifetimes, without putting insight into practice, so you can practice on and on without insight, without knowing spiritually why. Only socially why, because people around you are doing it and it always feels safer for the one to do whatever the many are doing. Putting second first like this may or may not delay the process of spiritual unfolding, I don't know. I do know that the sequence will be maintained anyhow, that practice won't become spiritual practice until there's been spiritual insight. Because practice here, unlike elsewhere, *is* performance. From the beginning, and before that, the cosmos has been sitting in audience.

Actually, more strictly speaking, practice comes third, or even fourth. First comes pain, spiritual pain, the feel of what Buddhists call Dukkha and Christians call "sin." Something wrong, vitally lacking. The feel, not the thought. This spiritual pain, like any pain, orients existence, sharpens it, points it towards relief. It rouses dreamy sensibilities to wakefulness, sets one's ear to listening, one's eye to looking, one's heart to yearning. And then, inevitably, sooner or later, in some form or other, comes a sound, a glimpse, a touch, of the way. This first personal perception of the way is spiritual insight, and it's a happy moment, all right. Like falling in love, like being handed a glass of the clear cool water of life. Suddenly, at long long last, you know! Know what this peculiar condition

Robert Granat writes in Las Cruces, NM. He has recently completed a book entitled From Here to Here.

of ours is about. Know why we've all been born against such incredible odds. You've been graced with spiritual insight.

This pleasant psychological state lasts a little while. But "illumination without application soon clouds to hallucination." The water in your glass begins to stagnate and stink. And this is an unhappy moment, all right, as unhappy as that other one was happy. So again the pain, the polarization, the pain-pointed probing: "What can I do about this?"

With do-about-this you've struck an aquifer. Do-about-this is spiritual practice. It may seem you're back where you were before, but that's only seeming. You've leapt forward. As with any organic process, what was has been metabolized into what is now. This pain is not the same and neither are you the same. It's the adolescent stage of spiritual maturation, this new misery, and we should be thankful we're miserable. Otherwise, we'd settle for the half and forget about the whole, lie down in the way and slip back to dreamland cuddling our soft insight like a teddy bear. Because we are—well, we know how we are: we're lazy.

So wonderful pain, spiritual pain!

Yes, but still we *are* hurting again, hence looking, listening, and longing again. Ah, but with a difference. Before we wanted to know, now we want to do. We've caught that glimpse of the way, lost it, and long to get back onto it. (We *are* on it, of course, but we're in no mood right now to appreciate that.) And so the previous round repeats like a spring harrowing, but on a plowed and fertilized field. Inevitably, sooner or later, we'll find our personal way to practice.

Practice means doing-about-it, practice means moving along it. The great way, like any way, is meant to be travelled, not traced on a map. And for this trip there's only one viable vehicle: you. You walk. There's no mass transportation system, though once in a while you may well get a lift.

To discover your personal way into the great way is another very happy moment indeed. But this time your happiness and you may both be a little more grateful, less effusive, less greedy, less likely to hug the life out of it. Besides, now you've found more than something to know about. You've found something to do about.

Do what? What *is* spiritual practice in practice? It's living, just living your life as before, but living it in mindfulness of this wonderful way we're walking, with the life-giving vision of what's really what for us, who's really who, switched on at all our moments at all our levels, con-

Sergio Bonotto

scious, subconscious, unconscious. It's just living a human life, but to live a human life in this way is better than mere happiness.

It is also damn hard. In fact it's impossible. In fact, but not in truth. The truth is we have only to do what we can and what we can't will be done as well. Don't ask me how or by whom. I don't know the answer to that nor have to, no more than an infant has to learn the chemical formula of milk. What I do know is that when we enter into spiritual practice we start flowing with the flow, the great flow, not the little eddies and backwaters, start going with the only current that's going anywhere.

> Spiritual practice generates light, and light, by its very nature is unselfish. Everything that's lit must share its light.

This may be an inspiring thought but it's still not specific. What *is* spiritual practice? Specifically, spiritual practice is prayer/meditation. Specifically, it means a time and space set apart daily, allotted and devoted daily, to our spiritual reality and nothing else but. Our "normalcy" is to spend almost all of our waking hours and many of our sleeping ones fussing like anxious mamas over our egobody life, pampering and primping, protecting and promoting. And under such attention, egobody life may indeed burgeon, or at least survive . . . for a while . . . maybe. A half-ounce of flying lead, a droplet of unfriendly viruses, an accidental twist of somebody's steering wheel, can wipe us egobodily away anytime. And even under the best nurture egobody remains an unsteady thing, forever wobbling between pleasure and pain, repeatedly breaking down and finally breaking up. Our spiritual life is otherwise, this life in us that neither wobbles nor ages, that's the same at eighty as it was at eight—this life which we "normally" take for granted and give short shrift. Spiritual practice simply means attending to this life. If we've got time to waste, we can debate endlessly about whether our spiritual life is immortal or not. With our egobody life there's no debate. It isn't.

Prayer/meditation, no matter what form fits us best, is the *sine qua non* of spiritual practice. This daily Sabbath is the pumping heart of spiritual life, as indispensable to it as that marvelous muscle is to egobody life. It's not merely the next stage of our way, it's the last stage—for egobodied beings like us, anyway. Last because it's never superseded by another

stage, not even with the best of us. Buddha continued to meditate after his enlightenment and Jesus continued to pray after his transfiguration. Last because from this stage on, the process proceeds *through* our practice, circulates outward from that pulsating center, oxygenating and vivifying all the cells—the thoughts, feelings, acts—of our egobody life. Slowly but inexorably it radiates outward from our personal existence to our communal existence. Spiritual practice generates light, and light, by its very nature, is unselfish. Everything that's lit must share its light.

All this takes time, of course. More time, factually, than we've got. Another fact that's not the truth. The truth is, we've got more than time.

Dear Deborah

CYNTHIA F. BARNUM

"How can I explain what it feels like to be liberated from useless handicaps like prejudice and racism?" In the following letter to a young woman about to be married, the author describes her discovery of the "love that takes in the whole human family" when she converted to Judaism.

We welcome your account of your own "transforming experience." Please send it (typed and double spaced) to the Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Dear Deborah,

First Night of Hanukkah,
December 4, 1988

Your mother has told me you'll soon be getting married, to a young man who's Jewish, and that you intend to convert. May I congratulate you and say "*Mazel Tov*!" Your mother asked me to share my experiences with you since I too married a Jew and converted to this faith. Since I have no special qualifications for this task I shall limit myself to the simple telling of my own story. I hope this humble record of another woman's feelings about a similiar experience will be useful to you at this significant point in your life, even though I know you will, and must, rely on your rabbi and your own congregation for the greater part of the process.

What I can offer you is a very personal view of my becoming a Jew. I ought to begin by confessing that I, of all people, would have once been considered the most unlikely candidate for such a conversion. Indeed, I was very much prejudiced against these people whom I have come to embrace; so maybe my journey to Judaism was longer than the one you'll be making, but, I am so glad I made this decision. I just hope that your life will be as deeply enriched by this choice as mine has been.

For me, there never really could have been a true spiritual life without this conversion. I was too blocked up with . . . disdain, and ignorance before. I learned about real love through my conversion, not just married love, but the love that takes in the whole human family, without which

Cynthia Barnum, a journalist formerly with CBS News, has lived in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, England, France and Venezuela, among other countries.

one's own family life would be a sorry undertaking. How can I explain what it feels like to be liberated from useless handicaps like prejudice and racism? In a sense, I feel whole and healed now. I'd inherited a lot of bitterness from growing up in the Muslim Arab world, although there's plenty of prejudice and racism in America, and not only against the Jews. Oddly enough, it was by letting go of my majority status, as "white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant" to join this much persecuted, long-suffering minority community, that I came back out into the larger world. I feel as though I've gone from a two-dimensional existence into a three-dimensional one. By viewing everything and everyone anew, through the prism of Judaism, life now looks deeper, wider and fuller, and sometimes sadder too.

How did all this happen? I wasn't a bad person before this, but I was a less enlightened one. I mean this in an almost literal sense, for I definitely feel lighter now, as if I've been illuminated, from within. This could happen to other people in other ways I suppose, but I do believe that this is my particular destiny.

Meeting my husband Max was the catalyst in my spiritual evolution, but I didn't convert for him, I did it for me. And I shall advise you to do the same. Find your own reason(s). I remember my rabbi, Rev. Marc Angel, a wise and learned man, telling me to be quite sure about this, "Don't do it for your husband, or under any kind of pressure. You must only do this of your own free will."

He'd also asked me "Why do you want to do this?" and I answered with a gut response, "Because, I want what Max has." Well, I'm still discovering "what Max has" one year later, in the way of goodness, faith and tolerance, and I expect to keep on discovering as long as we live. Rediscovering tolerance by converting might sound like a contradiction, but it's what I meant when I said I've come back out into the larger world.

Few people could claim to know as much about tolerance, and the lack of it, than the Jews, who've endured the worst horrors of intolerance, although they would hardly need to claim a monopoly on suffering to make theirs any more real. You probably already know something about the Holocaust, and I'm sure you'll learn more, about the Spanish Inquisition, the Russian pogroms, etcetera, but just the other month, here in New York, a synagogue in Brooklyn was desecrated; the Torah scrolls burned and grafitti and swastikas spray-painted on the walls. The need

for tolerance is ever with us, and by becoming a Jew you will see how critical this lesson is for us all on this little planet.

In my idealistic way, I sometimes wish I could wave a magic wand and make everyone who hated anyone *become* that person, race or religion, just to see how ugly and poisonous their hatred is, and how it robs them, the haters, of a real life. Your choice to convert is a conscious decision *not* to hate, but to love, and to embrace others, not just Jews, although we are duty-bound to show "God is the God of all the world, not just of Jewry" as it is so clearly explained in the book I'm certain you'll be studying, "*To Be a Jew*" by Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin. It is the special purpose of the Jewish people to be "a light unto the world" and to so encourage all other peoples, whatever their distinctive beliefs may be, to accept the oneness of God and God's basic values as they have been revealed to us in the Bible. And that very much includes "Love one another."

As it says in Genesis 28.14, "Through you and your descendents will all the families of the earth be blessed." That's what being a "chosen people" means. Each one of us must try to be "a light" and thus fulfill the larger destiny of us all. Remember, even Christianity and Islam have followed from the beginning "light" of Judaism. The Jews have had such a long and multi-cultural history, that "our" family quite literally spans the globe and encompasses the entire human race. I like this very much, knowing that there are Jews in China, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Iran, Spain and the Soviet Union, everywhere, makes me feel that it is as God said it would be.

It also makes me feel like I belong . . . I recall Rabbi Angel explaining that I'd be "joining this vast and quarrelsome family," and I've come to value that membership very much. Each Shabat I so look forward to seeing everyone at Shearith Israel, our synagogue. Your Jewish congregation will be essential to your conversion, because you'll need them, as a community, in order to feel Jewish. My rabbi advised me not to advertise the fact that I was converting and that was sound advice I'd like to pass along. Just find some good friends among the members, people whose lives exemplify what you'd like yours to become.

I don't know how religious your upbringing, or your husband's, was, but one's beliefs and values generally become more important as we grow older and I don't doubt that you'll feel the need to become more actively involved in your religion. Raising children also makes us focus

Brooks Walsh

on this need, as we consider the health of their spiritual lives, as well as our own. People who have no inner life are rarely happy in the long run, but it is for each of us to discover for ourselves just how to have this.

I feel fortunate to have become a Jew at the same time that I've become a wife and mother. Love of family is one of the things Max has. I don't mean that other religions don't value the family, they do, but the rituals and traditions of Jewish family life have had many centuries to develop, and they give our lives shape and form and continuity. You will be learning about your duties and responsibilities, but don't forget that all the laws of keeping kosher are the means by which we invest our daily lives with something more: the idea that life is sacred.

This is new for me, I did not feel it before. Once, just after I'd said the blessing and lit my two Friday night candles, I came to tell my husband, "*Shabat Shalom*" as I do now each Friday at sundown. He looked at me with such love and said, "You look . . . holy." That is what I mean. I felt this too the morning I walked to the *mikveh* in our neighborhood to complete my conversion with the ritual immersion in rainwater. I was quite overcome emotionally and kept reciting the blessings over and

over. This was a monumentous step for me, and I trembled as I went down the stone steps into the warm water with the lady attendant helping me. As I recited the proper blessings to the three rabbis on the other side of the door and let myself sink under the water each time, I felt as if I'd gone back into some great mother womb where love was unconditional and all-powerful. I was pregnant with baby Mira and I walked home that day, with my new name, Miriam, and my certificate in Hebrew and English, not yet knowing I'd be giving birth to little Mira Zohar who seems to be God's gift for all this, a blessing on our union.

As a woman, I feel more valuable now. In part because of the emphasis placed on the need for the mother to be Jewish, which indicates the greater significance of her role, but also because I am entrusted with so many of the duties that make this a Jewish family and a Jewish home. Fridays I hurry to have everything ready; the *challah* bread under its coverlet, the kosher grape juice for the *kidush* cup and the meal prepared in advance, and our "*cholent*" for the next day in the Crockpot and a kettle of water left on a back burner on a very low flame so we can still have coffee and tea without touching the fire. How I welcome the "island in time" that *Shabat* provides us! We stop, and rest, and appreciate each other and why we are alive.

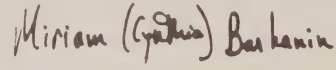
I was asked by a woman at my office how I could join such a "patriarchical" religion. She thought Jewish women somehow counted less than Jewish men. Well, it may appear that way from the outside, but within the family circle, it doesn't feel that way to me. Max has said that "a man without a wife is not complete." This idea has its origins even in the Jewish concept of God, who was not "an old man with a long white beard sitting on a throne in the sky," but rather, a unified entity, composed of blended male & female parts. We pray for that female part, *Shekinah*, to be reunited with God in heaven every *shabat*, which means a great deal to me. And I like it very much that rabbis marry and have children and a normal life like the rest of us. Our rabbi's wife, Gilda, teaches school, and is very active in many things, but she has also raised three children I'd be proud to call my own. The value of her role in their lives, and her husband's, is *central*, not just equal.

As Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, began tonight, it was my job to see that we had our colored candles and menorah ready. My husband was born in Morocco, and raised in Israel, so I guess some of our customs will differ from yours if your husband was born & raised here, but

for Sephardic Jews (non-European, ergo not Ashkenazi) Hanukkah is a time for remembering some of the many heroic Jewish women of the past, especially those of the Maccabean times this holiday originated in; the martyrdom of Hannah & her seven sons, & Judith's courage in killing the general who could've attacked Jerusalem. You will read of many more, including your namesake, Deborah, whose "song" is some of the most beautiful poetry in the Bible.

May I suggest that as you are "graduating" to wife, and soon, motherhood, that you allow people to call you by your full name, which is so pretty anyway. And may God go with you into this marriage, which is the meeting of two fates to fulfill a destiny. May you dance joyfully at your wedding, and at the wedding(s) of your children and your children's children . . . And if you have any questions, about anything, please don't hesitate to call your new sister-in-the-faith.

God bless you and keep you,



Miriam (Cynthia) Barhanin

Who Will Stand Up for God?

JAN BRESKY

According to this popular rabbi, a crucial act of self-giving is to "witness" one's faith. Tell people, he suggests, about yourself, about the God whom you have experienced in prayer, and about your relationship together.

A wealthy Jewish businessman called me and asked me to come to his office. When I arrived he invited me in and asked me to be seated in one of his plush leather chairs. Then he began to speak:

"It's not that I don't believe in God Rabbi, I really do. I talk to God about my life. I ask God for wisdom in my business dealings. And do you know what? God guides me, shows me the right way. So I know there is a God. My success is due to God's communication with me."

Then he stopped.

"Well, that's wonderful," I said. "Why did you want to see me?"

He hesitated.

"I just wanted you to know that just because I don't talk about this publicly, it doesn't mean I don't believe. I do. I just don't want people thinking I'm crazy, or some kind of religious fanatic."

He quickly sat down and quickly wrote the JMRC a check for several hundred dollars and then he ushered me to the door.

I certainly was glad to meet another believer and heaven knows we can use the money. But I was deeply troubled by one aspect to the businessman's belief, and ours. Why was he ashamed of knowing God? Why are we? Why are we in possession of quiet whispering souls?

You can almost justify the businessman's fears in proclaiming his faith. If you say to many people that God talks to you, and guides your life, they will probably think that you are neurotic at best, psychotic at worst; in short, crazy. This is thanks to our good friend Sigmund Freud who defined God as a wishful projection of one's father cast upon the screen of the heavens. Freud is long dead, but his criticism of belief in God has filtered into our daily thinking and speech.

Of course Freud was wrong. There is a God, both in the heavens and

Rabbi Bresky is a regular contributor to Fellowship in Prayer. *To obtain his newsletter,* The Spiritual Light, *which is dedicated to spiritual growth and inspiration, you may write to him at Box 88, Dunedin, FLA 34697.*

in our hearts. We know God by experience, the experience of prayer. It is no more crazy to say I am guided by my conscience (which cannot be demonstrated scientifically) or my subconscious (by which by definition cannot be demonstrated). But all this is technical. Like the businessman, we know there is a God. And like him, we are silent.

People are reluctant to confess their belief in public because they may be considered fanatics. We have heard all too often on a Sunday morning a preacher or televangelist say, "The Lord spoke to my heart and told me that *my* mission (not God's) must have more money." God's concerns are far deeper than the financial well-being of any self-indulgent minister (or rabbi).

People are reluctant to confess their faith publicly because no one wants to come across with an "I am better than you" attitude. I know you agree with me that one of the greatest obstacles in telling people about God is not sounding like the intolerant people who knock on your door with the little booklets and say, "Either do it my way or burn in hell." None of us want to come across as they do; self-righteous bigots.

Besides, shouldn't faith be a private matter, an intimate relationship with God? Yes, faith is private. It is a one-to-one relationship and communication with God on an ongoing basis. Yes, it is a very private and personal matter.

But . . .

God needs us to speak up!

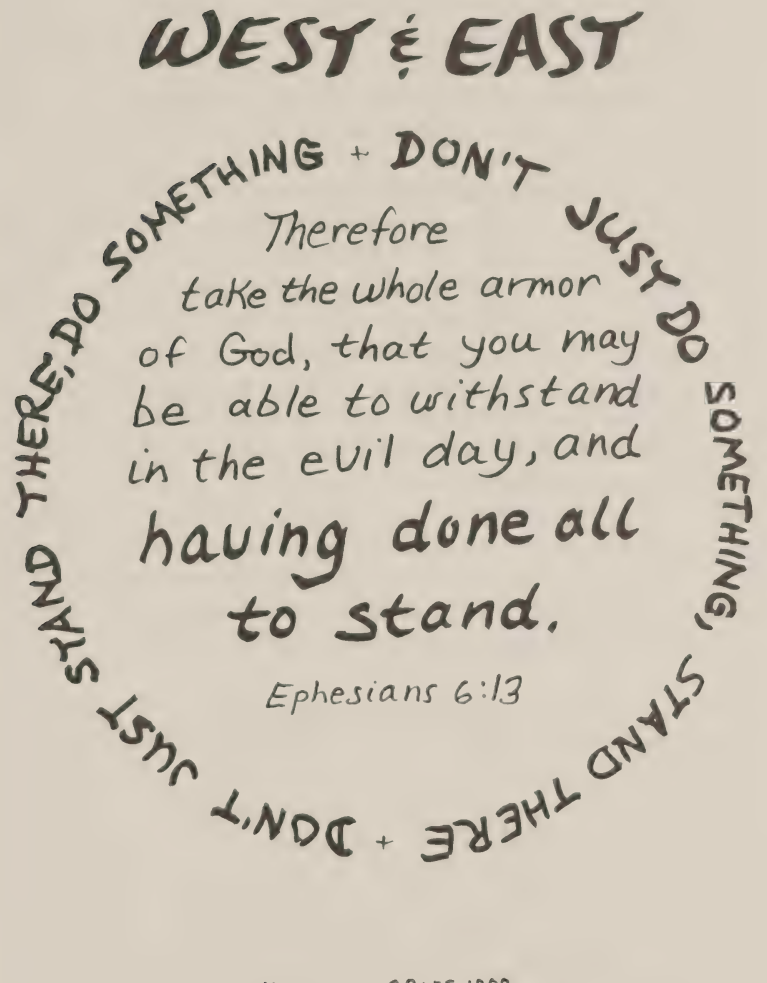
God needs us to witness our faith!

God needs us to outwardly declare our love!

The Hebrew prophet, Isaiah, expressed it so beautifully centuries ago (Isaiah 43.10 ff).

"My witnesses are you says the Lord God
My Servant whom I have chosen
To the end that you may take thought
And believe in Me.
And understand that I am God.
Before me no god was formed
And after me none shall exist . . .
So you are my witnesses declares the Lord
And I am God."

Why does God need us to publicly witness our faith? Because if we do not witness publicly for God, there are others who will fill the gap to


WEST & EAST
DON'T JUST STAND THERE, DO SOMETHING + DON'T JUST DO SOMETHING, STAND THERE +
Therefore
take the whole armor
of God, that you may
be able to withstand
in the evil day, and
having done all
to stand.
Ephesians 6:13
KENT I. GROFF 1988

witness and recruit for less noble purposes. Satanists and cult groups are not shy about witnessing and recruiting Skinheads. Aryan nation and neo-Nazi groups are not reticent about spreading their verbal faith. Drug pushers are not reluctant to recruit our young people to their greedy philosophy. Are their causes superior to God? Is their salesmanship for better purposes?

The opposite of a world without those who witness for God is not a neutral world. It is an evil world! Not choosing God is not choosing neutrality, it is silently endorsing evil.

Yes, there are dangers of expressing one's faith in a public setting. Yes, we can get overzealous, intimidating and chasing people away from the Lord. Yes, we can be what I call "Bible-thumpers," declaring our way is the only way and having 500,000 scriptural verses to "prove" it. Yes, we can even be so convinced in us (not God) that we would be willing to deny others their rights to express their faith differently.

The dangers of sharing faith are real. But so are the consequences of hiding our love and devotion to God. Of the two, a world without God, a world where we deny our responsibility and duty to declare God's Name is the more frightening.

When and how should we witness our faith? When you are with your family or friends and a quiet moment arises where you are willing to share, willing to open up your heart and soul, willing to heed the call of Isaiah, at that moment tell them about you, and God, and your relationship together. You might find them inspired by your faith to increase their own.

If you do not publicly speak up for God, who will?

Do it for God's sake. And for the sake of the world.

India's Lessons

ANNE THOMAS

Traveling in India has been both an interesting and challenging experience for me. Being a culture so foreign from my own, India has helped to sharpen my senses and has given me the opportunity to put my beliefs to some hard tests. Two experiences in particular stand out. First, however, it must be realized that for half a year I have been traveling in India alone. This situation makes me feel particularly vulnerable and be constantly vigilant.

Although I had been living in Third World countries for about ten years, I came to India full of pity for the beggars and the poor due to articles or books I had read or films I had seen. However, by being a woman traveling cheaply on my own, my actual experiences have caused my perspective to change from one of lofty ideals to a more practical one.

Naturally, my first shock concerned the diseased and poor, who are so overt and numerous in this country. How should I behave towards them? Idealistically, I should try to relieve their suffering in some way. Practically, however, it is difficult, if not impossible, when they follow me, pull at my clothes (literally pulling my skirt off once in the middle of New Delhi!), and plead in whiny voices incessantly and annoyingly. Not just a few, but hundreds of them in a day. Where should I draw the line between concern and service on the one hand, and self protection on the other?

That question and my uncomfortable feelings have traveled with me all the way through India, and seem to have peaked in Calcutta. Up until that time I had usually opted for self protection as a way to deal with beggars. I had found my experiences in India so overwhelming that it took everything within me to deal with what I saw. So, for emotional survival I tended to turn away from those outstretched hands and to walk past them, although I never felt comfortable doing so.

In Calcutta in desperation I started to pray in a way different than before. This time I did not pray for self protection, but for a way to help the poor. I prayed, visualized, and prayed some more. To add to my

Anne Thomas, who has lived in France, Spain, Colombia, Morocco, and Indonesia, as well as India, believes that through prayer, she has learned compassion and trust.

dismay, however, I saw absolutely no physical effects in the world around me from my efforts. Yet, I continued to pray day after day.

Gradually there was a result. I felt an unfolding of compassion within me. For the first time I did not have to defensively block out beggars as a means of self survival. Rather, I could truly, deeply look at them and see our shared humanness and our oneness on a spiritual level. I felt a flood of peace enter me and I was much more stable and balanced in my behavior and attitude towards the destitute. Even though I realized that as a traveler for a brief while in India I could not bring about actual changes there, I felt the power that prayer has upon me personally. The next requirement is to trust and leave the rest to God.

The second major incident that has tested me in India occurred after I had spent a pleasant day at the museum and sightseeing with an Indian fellow who then cleverly put drugs in my food and robbed me. I had heard tales of such things and I had been very wary of its happening to me. Ironically, the one time I loosened up on my extreme precautiousness, it happened to me!

And yet, I felt blessed: My whole sense of values shifted. The thing I treasured most, my camera, had been stolen, along with travelers' checks and cash. But instead of feeling upset about those losses, I felt an incredible sense of protection. Of course, I was acutely aware of my vulnerability, but I was in a family-run lodging where they took very good care of me, escorting to the police and helping me through the complicated network of bureaucracy in this country. They gave me a warm meal and changed my room to one closer to theirs. They were kindness itself.

I felt an unfolding of compassion within me. For the first time I did not have to defensively block out beggars as a means of self survival. Rather, I could truly, deeply look at them and see our shared humanness and our oneness on a spiritual level.

Secondly, I felt truly protected because for some odd reason the thief missed my passport, the bulk of my travelers' checks and my air tickets. So, even though I lost my camera, which was dear to me, cash and some travelers' checks, essentially I experienced no hardships. And I gained some new friends!

Losing my camera was important because it showed me how transi-

tory material things are and how useless it is to rely too much upon them. The one constant I carry with me is myself: the memories of the past, hopes and plans for the future and my thoughts and feelings in the present.

India seems to have stripped me of many of my former beliefs and securities. I no longer feel that trying to live a spiritual life will keep me from physical harm, as I naively had hoped. Now I see that leading a spiritual life gives me objectivity and inner centeredness to deal with what problems I have.

Likewise, I can see that the outcome of my prayers may not be as I anticipated, but that prayers are answered according to what lessons are needed at the time.

So, despite the hardships, uncertainties and insecurities I have and do feel here, I salute India and am truly grateful for the invaluable lessons and changes of attitude I have been allowed to experience while here. I truly feel that after those challenging months, I walk a bit closer to God.

Once a few years ago a friend of mine was doing some lovely paintings, which she would sell to help her financial situation. One day after I had been admiring one painting in particular, giving her my insights about what she had portrayed, much to my surprise she had her mother bring the painting to me as a gift. I began to protest, "I can't let you do this." She stopped me and said, "All you need to say is 'thank you'." So instead of saying all that I could about the value of having *FiP* in my life, I will just say "thank you."

Ruth Haley; Princeton, NJ

I want you to know how inspiring and meaningful the October, '88 President's Message was to me. I am now entering the second half of life that Jung spoke of, so this dialogue had special significance for me. I have just recently begun my "inward journey" and am not yet very sophisticated in my prayer life. However, I am trying very hard to discipline myself in this regard and am beginning to make *some* progress. I am noticing an inward calmness and peacefulness—acceptance is another aspect—which I desperately desire. This is a refreshing change for me. Your publication is playing a very powerful and positive role in my journey into faith. The book is beautifully written and truly inspiring and has become a *vital* part of my daily reading and meditation. Thank you!

Don Combs; Las Cruces, NM

Somehow a copy of your magazine came into my hands, and I thank God for this. It is not a recent issue, June, 1988, but it is very inspiring. I am very much in favor of your wonderful initiative to promote the practice of prayer among *all* religious faiths. Be assured of my prayers for the continued success of your beautiful publication. May God bless your efforts and work for the glory of God and the unity of all God's children.

S. Lorraine Marie; Waterville, ME

I am truly grateful for your issue on loss, which I have been carrying around in my purse to read as needed. I was moved by the depth and insight of your introduction and am trying to practice "surrender" and "creativity" to get over the loss of my job.

Name withheld; Medford, MA

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